

ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME

DIVISION OF COMMERCIAL FISHERIES

NEWS RELEASE



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MESH SIZE RESTRICTIONS EXTENDED UNTIL END OF JULY FOR SHAKTOOLIK AND UNALAKLEET RIVER DRAINAGES

Chinook salmon runs to the Shaktoolik and Unalakleet River drainages are showing exceptionally late run timing this season, perhaps the latest on record. However, the magnitude of these runs is also very weak as was the forecast this season. At present, the use of set gillnets in the Shaktoolik and Unalakleet Rivers is prohibited by emergency order until midnight, Sunday evening, July 21. However, significant numbers of Chinook salmon are believed to be milling in the lower reaches of these river drainages. Additional late season conservation measures will be necessary in order to ensure that these late run Chinook salmon reach the spawning grounds unharmed. Therefore, subsistence fishing with set gillnets will be allowed beginning midnight Sunday evening, July 21, for 24 hours a day, seven days a week, but will be limited to set gillnets with a mesh size no greater than 6 inches. This action will remain in effect until midnight Wednesday evening, July 31 to ensure that Chinook salmon reach the spawning grounds unharmed. The use of 6 inch mesh also provides subsistence users with reasonable opportunity to target late run chum salmon and early run coho salmon.

Current cumulative escapement counts of Chinook salmon on the North and Unalakleet River projects are 360 and 638 Chinook salmon, respectively. Projected escapement at the North River is expected to range between 530–850 Chinook salmon, whereas the Unalakleet River mainstem projected escapement is expected to range from 770 to 1,000 Chinook salmon. The latest assessment indicates that the North River tower-based escapement goal range of 1,200–2,600 Chinook salmon will not be achieved this season. Additionally, cumulative Unalakleet River weir passage to date also suggests that the Unalakleet River aerial survey goal range of 550–1,100 Chinook salmon will also not be reached this season.